



Superintendent of Public Instruction **Tom Horne Reports**



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Department of Education



Superintendent Tom Horne

Improvement of public education is very much a team effort. Everyone's help is needed. Therefore, I am reaching out in this newsletter so that not only will I have the chance to share information with you, but I can hear from you, as well.

In this first issue I report on two major areas: First, the theme is "Promises Made, Promises Kept." I report on eight promises I made when I ran for this office and what we have done to keep those promises. Secondly, I report on three new promises for the next year, summarized as "Better Schools, Better Teachers, Better Curriculum."

For more details on my first annual state of education speech, please visit <http://www.ade.az.gov/administration/superintendent/articles.asp>.

**Most Sincerely,
Tom Horne, Superintendent of Public Instruction**

Promise Made:

1. To enforce laws making English the language of the classroom

► New guidelines eliminated waiver abuse so that bi-lingual students become truly efficient in English.

► Thirty-five monitors from the Department ensured that schools were properly implementing immersion for English learning students.

► Over 400 Ariz. English language teachers attended a Super Seminar teaching best practices in English immersion.

Promise Made:

2. To ensure students pass a reasonable test to receive high school diplomas

► To graduate, this year's sophomores must pass a test of the skills and knowledge that one expects from a high school graduate.

► The "AIMS Ed" system, which allowed students who failed the test to complete a class project to graduate, has been eliminated.

► Previous test questions were developed by an out-of-state company and did not always reflect Ariz. standards. This year, 50 percent and next year, 100 percent of the questions will be developed by Ariz. teachers to test Ariz. standards.

Promise Made:

3. To hold schools accountable with a fair and accurate accountability system

► A system has been designed to measure the amount of progress students make in a school, not just the absolute level of achievement, in order to recognize schools that do an outstanding job in poor neighborhoods.

► There is a new focus on motivating and stimulating the average and the brightest students, and not just bringing up the students at the bottom.

► Using new standards, Ariz. now has 300 excelling or highly performing schools so that we may accurately point to examples of excellence in our communities.

Promise Made:

4. To ensure classroom discipline

► Partnerships have been formed with the state universities to bring behavior support programs to the schools.

► Best practices in character education were collected and school-wide positive behavior support workshops were held.

► ADE prepared a pamphlet for teachers and administrators to reference for behavioral rules. Also, a new page on the ADE website (www.ade.az.gov/disciplineinitiative) offers several resources to assist with discipline programs.

Promise Made:

5. To create budget discipline

► District superintendents have worked hard to move money from the district offices into classrooms for better teacher compensation and smaller class size.

► In one school there was a 20 percent reduction in district office administrators, for a savings of \$1.5 million, and 51 central office resource teachers went back to the classroom or retired, enabling the district to put an additional \$500,000 into classroom budgets.

Promise Made:

6. To reform social studies and history standards

► When Superintendent Horne took office, the history standards did not require high school students to learn about the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, the Revolutionary War, or the ideas on which this country is founded.

► In July, the State Board adopted the Superintendent's recommendation. Now, high school students will learn about our War of Independence, Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, foundation of our nation, as well as the Greco-Roman basis for western civilization.

Promise Made:

7. To encourage content-rich reading

► The Department promoted the idea that as students learn to read, they should be reading about social studies, science, and literature, not empty stories.

► A note to Superintendent Horne from Gail Caretto, Rose Lane School librarian: "When we got your letter about content-rich reading, we saw the relevance to what we were trying to accomplish as well. We will be working together with our parents to accomplish our goal for each child to read 20 content books at the primary level or 600 pages at the fourth grade level."

Promise Made:

8. To promote character education in order to produce well-balanced graduates

► ADE now has a Character Education and Development

Division that has trained over 5,000 teachers and students through nearly 100 teacher in-services, community presentations and conferences.

► Over 50,000 character education parent books, comic books, and inserts were distributed.

► Over 500 schools in Arizona now have formal character education programs.

**" I study war and politics,
so my children can study
business and commerce,
so their children can study
literature and the arts."**

John Adams

1

Better Schools

School improvement has three stages. (1) Create a fair and accurate measurement system, which we have already done. (2) The current focus is an intensive program to help schools identified by that system as needing it. This process is based on Solutions Teams and is well under way. Over 250 outstanding Ariz. teachers and administrators have applied for these teams. By departing from the tradition of hiring expensive consultants and identifying outstanding Ariz. teachers and administrators to serve on Solutions Teams, we validate and honor our own outstanding educators while providing more efficient stewardship of public funds. Because teaching is often the best way to learn, they will also acquire helpful new skills while helping other districts improve.

(3) The final state is direct state intervention in schools that cannot improve on their own. This Oct. the Superintendent will recommend direct intervention in schools that are failing to make progress. No student should ever again attend a school where he or she does not learn.



Superintendent Horne reports on the state of education in Arizona at a school auditorium in Flagstaff. Horne also spoke in Prescott, Tucson and Phoenix at highly performing Title I schools.

2

Better Teachers

The coming year will bring new focus on the development of larger numbers of highly qualified professionals. The department has partnered with the deans and representative professors at all of our colleges of education. Our goals are: (1) to break down artificial barriers so that it is easier for bright students to enter the teaching profession, either as undergraduates, or as those who want to come into teaching mid career, (2) to enhance the time that is spent in teacher preparation to include less theoretical lectures and more practical training and (3) to assist teachers already in the classroom.

We are sponsoring professional development seminars emphasizing effective teaching strategies and the use of technology, as well as technology conferences in partnership with the Arizona Technology in Education Alliance. We will emphasize web-based professional development for remote areas.

Additionally, we are developing a statewide mentoring and induction program to help retain the over 30 percent of teachers who leave the classroom within the first three to five years.

Finally, the Reading First program that was originally only available to 63 schools through a federal grant, will now be available to any of Arizona's 1,800 schools that want to participate. Training will be offered in the use of available funding sources to implement the components of Reading First, whether or not schools are receiving targeted federal funding so that all of our teachers in the early grades become highly effective teachers of reading.

3

Better Curriculum

Our third initiative is to expand the idea of content-rich reading to emphasize content-rich curriculum. The goal is to combat the unintended consequence of the testing culture; schools focusing on the subjects tested -reading, writing and mathematics- to the exclusion of science, social studies and the arts. Studying these subjects properly can be a good way to prepare for tests in reading, writing and mathematics. For example, good content background knowledge in science and social studies is essential to good reading comprehension.

Research has found that students receiving arts education outscored similar students not receiving arts education, in every academic area. In language, scores were 30 percent higher. For Latino students, language scores were 55 percent higher. Latino students receiving arts education are closing the academic achievement gap with their non-Latino peers.

In 2002, the Tucson Unified School District received a grant from the U.S. Department of Education to fund Opening Minds through the Arts, (OMA) which integrates arts learning, specifically music, dance and drama, into the classrooms.

In 2004, ADE will take OMA statewide. The Department will begin a three-year, \$1 million, federally funded replication project to bring OMA to pilot schools throughout the state. We will study why OMA has such a positive impact on academic achievement, especially for Latino students. We also hope to attract support from business and foundation partners, so that still more schools can participate.

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If you have questions, comments or story ideas, contact constituent services at adenews@ade.az.gov or call 602-542-3710.

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